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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ITALIAN VIEWS ON JUNE 13 GAERC AGENDA; ITALY WILL
SUPPORT HARD-LINE ON CUBA

REF: A) STATE 105235 B) STATE 102505

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN.
REASON:1.4 (B)(D)

Constitution

1. (C) MFA Director for EU CFSP Luigi Mattiolo told Poloff that since this is the first GAERC after the French and Dutch "no" on the Constitution, FM's will discuss, over dinner Sunday evening June 12, alternatives on the way forward for ratification and the implications of freezing the process for EU initiatives across the board, from enlargement to ongoing negotiations on the EU's financial perspective for 2007-2013 to efforts to create a true Common Foreign and Security Policy. The way ahead should be more clear after the final Council meeting of the Luxembourg Presidency on June 16. Mattiolo's personal view is that the ratification process should go forward as planned, with a reevaluation of options in November of 2006 if 4/5 of member states have ratified, as stipulated in the current treaty draft. He is hopeful that the "flexibility" in PM Blair's statement on UK's ratification process will allow Blair, at the next Council of Ministers meeting, to announce that the referendum will go forward for a vote sometime before the November 06 deadline.

Balkans

2. (C) Mattiolo indicated that Ministers would focus on Bosnia during the Balkans session of the GAERC, specifically the 16 priority areas identified in the EC feasibility study. In addition ministers will address progress on OHR Ashdown's programs on police reform. Mattiolo said that the Italian position will be to highlight the positive general trends in civil society institutions, but note that more progress is needed on political and economic reforms for further Bosnian integration into trans-Atlantic institutions. Italy will also contribute to a positive assessment of the EUFOR mission (Operation Althea)

3. (C) Mattiolo said that Ministers would also discuss briefly Kosovo. Italy will underline the need to designate clear guidelines and benchmarks as discussions on standards, and eventually status, proceed.

Cuba

4. (C) Mattiolo said that it was important for the EU to find common ground on a "tough" position regarding the human rights situation in Cuba. Italy was already discussing the issue with its EU partners in the COLAT, and would support a "reaffirmation" in the GAERC conclusions of the June 2003 restrictive measures. Italy believes it is important for the EU to underline with Havana that its common position is still in force, and to reiterate that it wants to see progress on specific human rights areas, such as release of political prisoners, before enhanced engagement with the regime can take place. Italy will also support including in the conclusions a condemnation of restrictive measures against local and foreign media, and visits of European lawmakers to Cuba. MFA Director for Central America and the Caribbean Paolo Miraglia expressed appreciation for points and suggestions ref b, and confirmed that Italy is looking for ways to encourage some of its more reluctant EU partners to take a harder line on Cuba. He promised to review our specific suggestions and incorporate our recommendations into ongoing discussions in Brussels.

SEMBLER

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